



UK developments: risk-based approaches

Douglas Blackstock

Chief Executive

2 February 2017



Northern Ireland
Assembly



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



The Scottish
Government



Characteristics of the UK higher education sector

Mass levels of participation, with high student retention

2.28 million students (2015-16) in the UK and over **670,000** studying overseas with UK providers

A world-leading research base

Diverse range of providers – universities, colleges, private provision

Recognised worldwide for high quality and standards



2009

- **QAA paper**, 'Future Directions for Audit & Review'
- Refers to the '*diminishing returns*' of cyclical review

2011

- **UK Government White Paper**
- "*We will introduce a risk-based quality regime that focuses regulatory effort where it will have most impact.*"

2013

- **Introduction of Higher Education Review**
- Intended as a more flexible, risk-based method

2014-
16

- **Quality Assessment Review** in England, Northern Ireland & Wales
- "*Any future quality assessment system must be risk-based and proportionate.*"

2016-
17

- **New operating model for quality assessment** published
- "*Proportionate, risk-based and grounded in the context of each individual provider and its students.*"
- **Government White Paper and new Higher Education & Research Bill**

*“We are committed to monitoring the market using a **risk-based approach**, treating all providers with parity, and focusing intervention where risks arise.”*

“This will ensure that we maintain a high and rigorous bar for entry into the system and for providers where there is cause of concern, whilst significantly reducing the burden of inspection on those providers, whatever their historical status, where we are confident that they are performing well.”

“We will be abolishing the previous process of cyclic quality review where every provider, regardless of risk, was reviewed after the same number of years.”

Government White Paper
Success as a Knowledge Economy
May 2016

A time of significant change in UK higher education

Quality assessment review

2016-17 Higher Education & Research Bill

2017 Technical & Further Education Bill

New Teaching Excellence Framework

Major developments in the devolved administrations

'Brexit' vote to leave the EU – Supreme Court ruling that a Parliamentary Bill is required



International context

Questions about quality assurance/ accreditation

Shift towards risk-based approaches in major systems
(Australia, England/UK, and USA?)

Addressing diversity of provision in mass systems

Greater emphasis on student outcomes

Implications for future quality assurance?

Next steps and challenges

Implementation of new regulatory framework:

Spring 2017	Bill passed in Parliament
2018-19	New Office for Students operational
2019-20	New regulatory framework in place

Enhancement and improvement in a risk-based system?

Continuing to identify, disseminate and celebrate best practice

Thank you



qaa.ac.uk



enquiries@qaa.ac.uk



+44 (0) 1452 557000

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2017

Registered charity numbers: 1062746 and SC037786



QAA